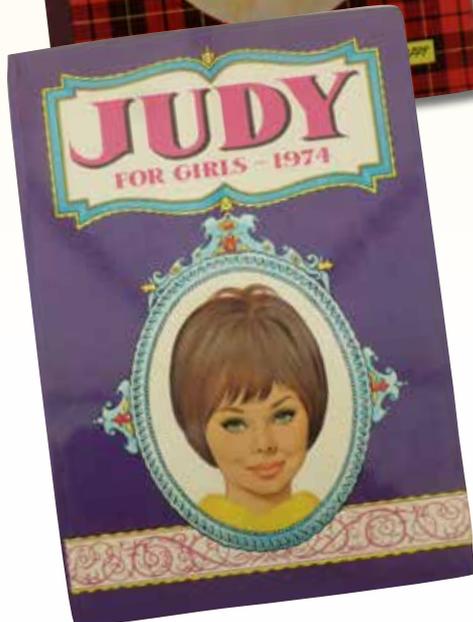
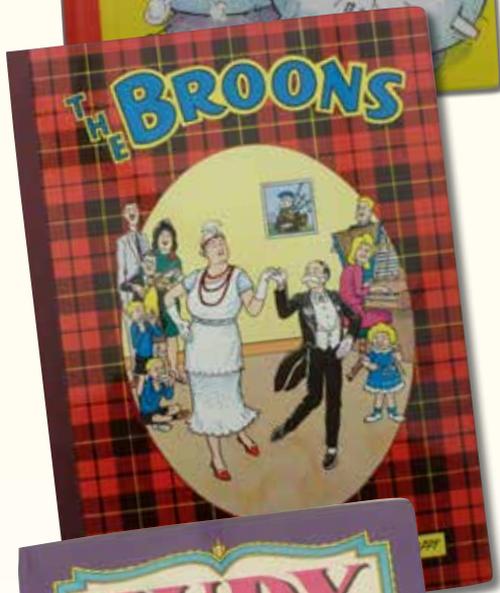
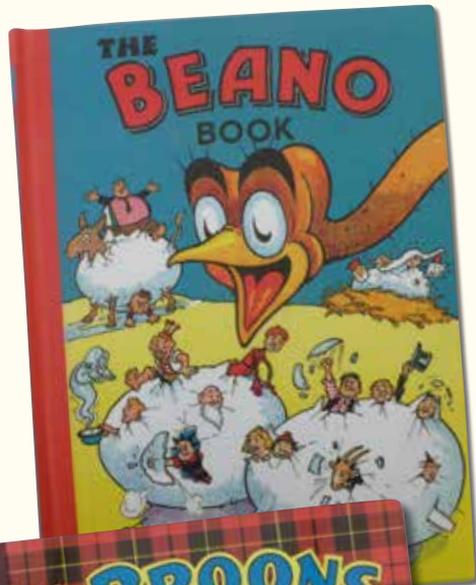


AN ANNUAL TREAT!



Annuals published in the 1930s to 1960s are said to be the most sought after, and certain years can command high prices

Young people might be more interested in the virtual worlds of their video games these days, and many toys and comics have been long forgotten, but there's one stocking-filler stalwart that remains a popular present for young and old – the annual

Today millions of annuals are purchased each Christmas, covering subjects as varied as Dr Who, Blue Peter and the Brownies, with youngsters thrilled to receive a fun, hardback book that is intended to be enjoyed throughout the coming year. Take a look at most kids' bookshelves and you'll no doubt see the uniform spines of a favourite annual... if only we older, supposedly wiser folk had kept our Broons, Beano and Buster annuals from all those years ago, we could be sat on a goldmine. According to collector-turned-comic-and-annual-auctioneer Phil Shrimpton, many old annuals are now worth hundreds of pounds. 'The first Broons and Oor Wullie annuals from 1939 and 1940 are very rare,' he says. 'The first Oor Wullie sold for £5,400 at auction in November 2014.'

A YEAR'S WORTH OF FUN

The longevity of titles such as Beano (first annual 1940), Dandy (first annual 1939) and Rupert Bear (first annual 1936), all still published today, proves our ongoing love of the unique book format. According to Phil, a lot of the appeal of the books comes from the large cover. 'Annuals have wonderful covers which, despite the fact they are aimed at the Christmas market, usually did not have a Christmas theme,' he tells us. 'The book is meant to represent an annual for the whole year. Also, from a commercial point of view, an annual with a Christmas themed cover is almost out-of-date, or at least out of season, once Christmas

has passed, whereas an annual with a non-Xmas themed cover is likely to sell into January and February. Some of the covers extended from the front to the rear cover and are very appealing to the eye – Beano from the mid 1950s spring to mind.'

Inside the annuals, readers were, and still are, treated to a mix of longer stories, jokes, puzzles, and, perhaps most importantly to today's annual collectors, wonderful, bright artwork, bringing together the readers' favourite characters and subjects in one title.

Perhaps you remember receiving copies of the Rupert Bear annual each year, with the beautifully drawn strips giving the reader the choice of enjoying a quick version or a more in-depth story. Then there were, of course, the long-running Beano and Dandy annuals, published in Dundee, with a host of friendly characters welcoming you into the fun comic-book world. For Phil it was these DC Thomson titles that captured his imagination.

'One Christmas my parents bought me a compilation reprint annual called *The Dandy and The Beano – the First Fifty Years* which contained pictures of old strips, comics and annuals, and a love of the earlier artwork (of the 1950s to 1970s) developed and a desire to collect the old annuals.' Before long the love of the books had turned into a hobby. 'From a collecting point of view, annuals are appealing as they represent something of interest to collect and due to the fact they were published just once a year, they are a finite collection and therefore, within



The Beezer, Black Bob and Oor Wullie annuals were published by Dundee firm DC Thomson & Co Ltd, who continue to produce annuals today, including the ever-popular Beano book

What should a reader do if they have lots of old annuals that they might like to sell? Annual expert Phil Shrimpton explains:

'We regularly hear from people who find their childhood stash of annuals in their parent's loft or renovate a house and find a long-forgotten but once loved collection. In this instance they should approach a reputable comic book dealer, such as ourselves, phil-comics, who will be able to advise which annuals are collectable and therefore of value. Some annuals can appear to be very nice but just aren't widely collected, so are of little value. But many are widely collected.'

'As a general rule, annuals from the 1930s to the 1960s are very collectable and almost certainly worth selling, but it does depend on the title as they can be just a couple of pounds, or can be tens of pounds. Annuals from the 1970s are still very collectable but are more common, so the value tends to be lower. Collectors are often completists and want all the annuals in a set, so even those from the 1980s to the present day are collected, but are so common they're often only worth a few pounds and are in ready supply in collectable condition.'

reason, realistic to collect the whole set or acquire the issues you want to find,' Phil explains. 'To acquire the full set of Beano Books requires buying 77 books and although the early annuals can be expensive, one can still buy lower grade annuals at lower prices.'

At first glance, it seems many of the annuals collected today cater for the boys, but as Phil explains, there is a growing band of female collectors. 'One could argue that going round collectors' fairs on a Sunday afternoon with a check list of wants is more a man's thing, but with the advent of eBay and internet buying, more female collectors are seeking out their long lost girl's annuals and comics... there

have certainly been numerous titles aimed specifically at girls, such as *School Friend, School Girl, Girls Crystal, Princess, Princess Tina, and Penny*. The big DC Thomson titles of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were, of course, *Bunty, Judy, Mandy* and *Debbie* but also titles aimed at older girls like *Spellbound* and *Misty*. Also pop magazines such as *Diana* and *Jackie* which were aimed at teenage girls.

UNDER THE HAMMER

So what of the prices? While today's annuals cost around £7.99 from your local bookshop, examples from previous decades can command huge prices. Naturally it's a case of supply

and demand, while the condition of the book is also a key factor. Rupert annuals, Phil explains, have seen a drop in prices in recent years due to there being no shortage of them on internet auction site eBay. 'They were also produced originally in very large numbers and on better quality paper so likely survived better.' But thanks to the yearly publication schedule, even more common annuals have certain rare years, the 1942 Rupert, for example, commanding around £500.

It's no surprise that DC Thomson's output attracts great interest with collectors and some editions sell very well. 'The most unusual annuals I have come across were former DC Thomson



file copies of Oor Wullie from the early 1950s,' Phil says. 'The Oor Wullie books reprinted strips drawn by the legendary Dudley Watkins from the Fun Section of the weekly *Sunday Post* newspaper of Scotland. The hardback file copy books are incredibly rare as only a very few copies were published, for in-house editorial use, although obviously a few may have escaped over the years. RD Low, who was the editor of the SP Fun Section for over twenty years, used to let any staff scriptwriter submit scripts to Oor Wullie and the Broons which led to a very eclectic set of story sources being used. Low would use his harder wearing hardback file copies to keep track of story ideas that had been used and to reference and hopefully weed out any overused script situations from one biennial book to the next... These hardback books are very rare and we acquired four a couple of years ago. The 1950 annual sold for £910, and recently a 1952 annual fetched £946. A regular example from 1952 would normally sell for £300-400, so these hardback annuals are very sought-after indeed.'

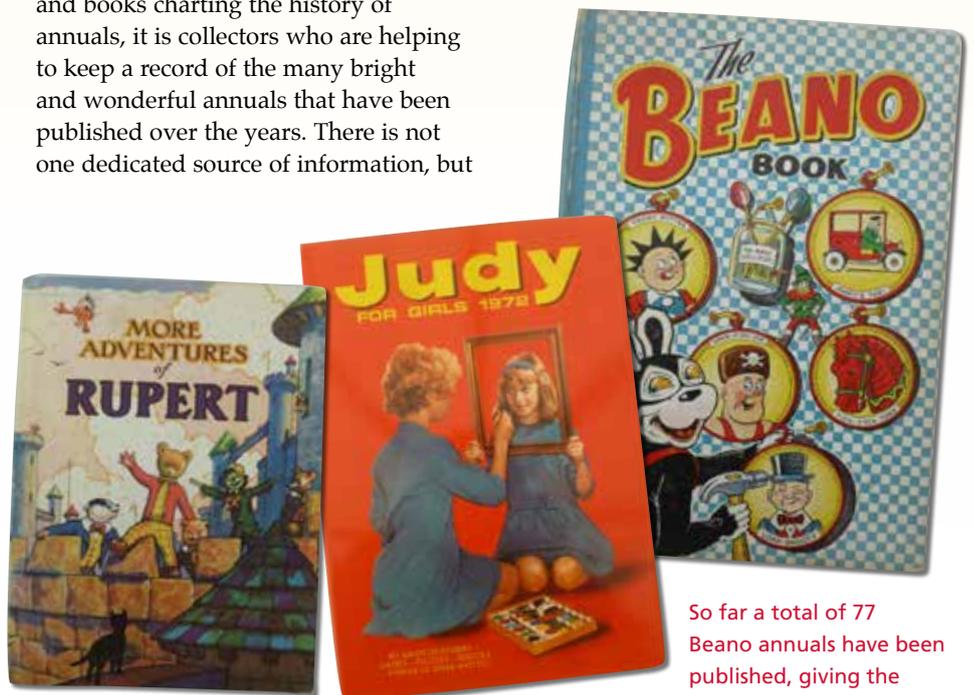
Of course it's not just about money, for many annual collectors the inspiration to keep adding to a collection is the nostalgia, as they recall the books they received, or really wanted, all those years ago. 'Collecting is often about nostalgia and those collecting them tend to be those who read them as a child,' Phil confirms. 'Therefore titles such as

Film Fun and *Radio Fun* which were phased out in the 1950s would have been read originally by those who are now in their sixties and so there tend to be fewer of them. Many children's books from the 1920s and 1930s are hardly collected due to the sad fact that very few people are still around that would have read them. Annuals such as *Greyfriars Holiday* annual from the 1920 to 1941 are not widely collected today although some collectors do still appreciate the artwork.'

Whilst there have been catalogues and books charting the history of annuals, it is collectors who are helping to keep a record of the many bright and wonderful annuals that have been published over the years. There is not one dedicated source of information, but

collectors including Phil, have published books and websites to keep the memory of annuals alive. 'Our own website, phil-comics.com has a huge image archive of our auction results which includes pictures of many annuals.' 🌸

What started as a love of comics and annuals, and then became a hobby, is now a fully fledged business for Phil, as he trades in vintage British comics, annuals, books, holiday specials, free gifts, artwork and memorabilia. You can find out more at his website: www.phil-comics.com



So far a total of 77 Beano annuals have been published, giving the collector many to pursue